

D.C. court expands staff after increase in gay weddings

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By [Lou Chibbaro Jr.](#) on September 16, 2013



David Kero-Mentz and his new husband Ken Kero-Mentz waited two hours for their marriage license to be processed in July. (Photo courtesy of the couple)

The D.C. Superior Court announced on Friday that it has increased the staff and added two additional rooms for its Marriage Bureau to meet a sudden increase in demand for marriage licenses and courthouse weddings from same-sex couples.

Among other things, a court official said one of the additional rooms would be used to interview applicants seeking a marriage license and the other would be used to perform wedding ceremonies.

Court observers, including gay and lesbian couples applying for marriage licenses, told the Blade last week that applicants often had to wait between two and three hours in a single packed waiting room to have their applications processed. Others said couples requesting to get married at the courthouse had to wait at least two months for their ceremony to be scheduled.

“When we realized that our current staffing and space did not accommodate the recent demand for our services, we added staff and converted space to meet the need,” said Duane Delaney, the Clerk of the Superior Court.

In a statement released on Friday, Delaney said in the last two months the court saw the number of people applying for a marriage license more than double.

Court spokesperson Leah Gurowitz told the Blade that the budget sequestration imposed by Congress resulted in a hiring freeze on the federally funded D.C. courts since April 1. She said the additional staff members assigned to the Marriage Bureau have been transferred to the bureau on a temporary basis from other branches of the court.

“It is unclear if the increased workload is temporary or will be sustained,” Gurowitz said. “We will adjust staffing levels as necessary.”

The statement released by the court said the second ceremony room was scheduled to open Monday, Sept. 16, “potentially doubling the number of courthouse marriage ceremonies each day.”

The Supreme Court’s landmark decision in the case of U.S. v. Windsor struck down the provision of the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act that prohibited legally married same-sex couples from obtaining federal rights and benefits of marriage. Now that married same-sex couples are eligible for most of those benefits, large numbers of same-sex couples that had not married in the past are choosing to tie the knot, according to experts monitoring the situation.

Since D.C. does not have a residency requirement, many same-sex couples from other states, especially Virginia, are descending on D.C. to get married, according to local gay rights attorney Michele Zavos.

Gurowitz said prior to the Supreme Court decision, the court received an average of between 300 and 400 applications for marriage licenses each month. But since the decision was handed down on June 26, the number of couples applying for licenses jumped to 977 in July and totaled 908 in August.

Those applying for the licenses said the overwhelming majority of the additional people coming to the Superior Court’s Marriage Bureau since the increase began appear to be same-sex couples.